

country has to offer, but I have also tried to extend it to others in every way that I could. I am immensely grateful for the opportunity to have served in this body. I am humbled by this moment, and I am grateful to my colleagues for your friendship and support.

I yield the floor.

Mr. KYL. Mr. President, as Senator MARTINEZ knows, the minority leader of the Senate could not be here this morning. I made some brief remarks yesterday, but let me say, just kicking off some comments I know others of my colleagues want to make, that in addition to the other attributes that Senator MARTINEZ has brought to the Senate representing the people Florida, his personality, his engaging wit, and his love of people, his spirit, his friendliness, and his genuineness, all have been appreciated by all of us, I know, very much. So it is even more difficult for us to see him leave because, in addition to being a good colleague and a great Senator, he has been a wonderful friend.

I think all of us appreciate that quality of genuineness, which is not always the order of the day when it comes to people in politics. With Kitty and MEL MARTINEZ, it is. We appreciate and love them very much and we will miss them.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Illinois is recognized.

TRIBUTE TO SENATOR MEL MARTINEZ

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I wish to say a few words about my friendship and my admiration for the retiring Senator from the State of Florida. I didn't know Senator MARTINEZ before he came to the Senate. I think the first time I had an insight into who he was and what he brought to the Senate was at a Prayer Breakfast, when Senator MARTINEZ explained to a number of us how he happened to be an American. He was one of the fortunate few who escaped from Cuba under the tyranny of the Castro regime and was given a chance to come to Florida. He told me and others how difficult it was, struggling with a language he didn't know. He explained that one of the real saviors for him was the fact that he was a good athlete so he was able to play many sports, make many friends, and learn English in the process. He became not only an integral part of that community in Florida but an integral part of America's political future.

In his story of growing up in Florida, his family—his wife Kitty and his children—mean the world to him. When I heard he was retiring, I called from Illinois to reach him and wish him the best. I asked, as everyone would: Why? He said: It is all about my family.

I wish to tell the Senator I salute him for that. It takes an extraordinary amount of courage for a person to give up the adulation and the heady atmosphere of the Senate, to remember what is most important in their lives.

I also thank him for his extraordinary courage and helpfulness on so many issues, particularly when it came to issues of immigration. I know Senator MARTINEZ feels this personally. This is something that he has been through himself and he knows so many others alike who are looking for that chance to prove to America that they can make a contribution.

Senator MARTINEZ has been an outspoken supporter of the DREAM Act, which was an opportunity for younger people to have their chance in America. I thank the Senator for that. I know it was not easy because there are many critics, as the Senator you told me, who would come forward and tell him what a bad idea it was. But the Senator's courage in standing for that is an indication of the kind of person he is.

Florida is going to lose a great Senator in MEL MARTINEZ. America is going to lose an important voice in the Senate. But I don't think we have heard the last of MEL MARTINEZ. I think his contribution, whether as a citizen or some other walk of life in public service, is in the future.

I am honored to count you as a friend and colleague in the Senate. I wish you and your family the very best.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee is recognized.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, I often think how the best stories in the Senate are not the political stories. We can all recount them—Senator INOUE's bravery in World War II, leading to a Congressional Medal of Honor; the former majority leader, Bill Frist, performing open heart surgery on General Petraeus when he was accidentally shot in Fort Campbell; Ben Nighthorse Campbell on the Olympic judo team; JIM BUNNING in the Hall of Fame; JIM INHOFE circling the world in an airplane the way Wiley Post did; Ted Stevens flying the first cargo plane into Beijing in 1944 at the end of World War II; and then after the elections of 2004, we had Ken Salazar from Colorado, 15th-generation American, whose family came to this country so early; we had Barack Obama with his incredible story; and then we had MEL MARTINEZ in the same year.

Despite the emotion of all those stories, the story of MEL MARTINEZ stands out to me. As the Senator from Illinois said, imagine growing up in Cuba—a good life. Not a rich life, but a good life—so well recounted in this book, "A Sense Of Belonging," that Senator MARTINEZ wrote. Suddenly the Castro regime comes, it is 1958, and one day your parents put you on an airplane and send you to Miami, not knowing whether they will ever see you again. Then foster homes, then bringing your parents over, going to Florida State, meeting Kitty, becoming the first Hispanic lawyer, I guess, in Orange County, and then the mayor and then a Cabinet member, then Senator, then Republican National Committee chairman—what a terrific story, so well told in this book.

One thing about our country that is unique is we believe anything is possible. The rest of the world looks at us and thinks that we Americans are very naive, but constantly we prove that anything is possible, over and over again—often with the election of a President from unusual circumstances, as we just had. But the story of MEL MARTINEZ, his escape from Cuba's communism, his coming from that, speaking no English, to what he has already accomplished, and now moving on to yet another career, this one in private life, is an inspiration for our country. He has enriched this body. He says in his book:

My journey has taught me that it is not an empty cliché that this country is a land where dreams can and do come true.

His life shows that. We have enjoyed his friendship. We appreciate his example for the country, and we wish him and Kitty well for the next chapter in their lives.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Dakota.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, I join my colleagues in congratulating my friend from Florida for his service to our country. He has served in so many different ways as has already been noted. But he is truly an example of the American success story, someone who came here, established himself, and has risen to the very highest, I guess you would call it, echelons of this country in terms of public service and his contributions to the private economy in this country. So it is with great regret that we say goodbye to him as a Senator but continue to maintain the strong friendships we have built and developed during his service here.

They say that someone is measured not by the days in their life but by the life in their days. While Senator MARTINEZ has maybe not served here as long as some other Senators—he and I came into this Senate together back in 2005—he may not be measured by his days of life in the Senate, but he is certainly measured by the life of his days in the Senate because he has added vitally to the debate here. He is an incredibly thoughtful Senator, someone from whom I have to say I have learned a lot—not just in our personal friendship but professionally—because he brings so many insights and such a thoughtful way in the way he looks at issues—domestic issues, foreign policy issues. I have learned a lot about Cuba. I have learned a lot about Latin America.

I have learned a lot about the Hispanic community in this country. And those are insights and contributions that he has made that no one else could make. It is very rare, indeed, to have someone of his experience and life experience and his quality to serve in the Senate and be able to rub shoulders and learn every single day from those experiences.

I congratulate Senator MARTINEZ and his family. As he said, like myself and many others of us, MEL married over

his head. He has a wonderful wife and family. And I hope that now, when he is not a Member of the Senate, we will get to see a little bit more of him in the State of South Dakota, because his son John married a South Dakota girl. I have been trying to hunt pheasants. He has made trips up there, but it is always a little bit later in the season when that time of the year comes around, and the climate tends to change in South Dakota. But I hope that now that he has a little bit more time to enjoy those types of things, we will get that chance.

I want to express my great appreciation to the Senator from Florida for an extraordinary run here in the Senate. He truly is the kind of person where what you see is what you get. That is rare in politics today—genuine, thoughtful, sincere, kind, generous, the kind of person who serves whom I want to see more of in public life.

It has been a pleasure and an honor to have had the opportunity to serve with him in the Senate and to call him a colleague. But it is even a greater privilege and honor and opportunity to have been able to call him my friend.

So, MEL, best wishes. Whatever you do, you are going to do well. We are proud of you. And thank you for your great contributions to our country. God bless you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from South Carolina is recognized.

Mr. GRAHAM. This is the time in a person's career you are supposed to lay it on thick. But there is no need to do that in MEL's case. I think everybody here speaking on both sides of the aisle is trying to say thank you for your friendship, and there are a million ways to say it. To Kitty, again, thank you for being part of our lives here. We are going to continue this relationship.

I think all of us have got stories about MEL. I first heard about MEL by reputation. He was a Republican trial lawyer. That intrigued me. There are not many of us. We can meet in a phone booth. I got to know MEL during his campaign and did some events for him. I think that experience of representing people in court made him a good Senator because he understands that there are two sides of every story, and sometimes a person needs the best advocate they can get, even though their cause may not be so popular at the moment.

But I got to know MEL during the immigration debate. That is a hell of a way to meet someone. You will learn quickly when you are talking about politics at that level, that emotional, and MEL was going to be part of that debate whether he wanted to or not because of who he was. You could not talk about immigration and not think about MEL MARTINEZ. He was the first one to show up and he was the last one to leave, and we will get that bill passed one day. It will be a tribute to MEL and Senator Kennedy that the guts of the bill will be the solution that will be embraced down the road.

That was tough politics. We would reminisce at night. And SAXBY was involved. We would meet every morning in the room over there, the President's Room, with Senator Kennedy and Senator McCain, trying to figure out where we were based on what happened the night before. Usually we had lost ground, but we kept plugging. But a lot of stories were told about what was going on in MEL's life.

There is a lot of hatred out there, quite frankly. There are a lot of people who should be upset about the immigration system not working and broken borders and legitimately concerned about the solution we were offering. But there were some people who were, quite frankly, hateful. I think MEL took the brunt of that more than anyone else. It did not get a lot of publicity, and probably it should not. But I know what he and Kitty went through to try to fix a broken immigration system. I will be forever grateful for their effort, because it was personally very difficult.

When MEL left a repressive place, he came to a hopeful country, and during that debate he never lost sight of what America is all about. America will never be defined by the people who hate. America will always be defined by people who love and care. I have never met two people who love and care more than Kitty and MEL. You will be missed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Kansas is recognized.

Mr. BROWNBACK. Mr. President, I too join my colleagues in recognizing MEL MARTINEZ and his great contribution to this body and his friendship. I think most of those things have been said.

One of the things I learned from a leader in the Senator's State was a saying that he gave to me that: We get into trouble when we look at people as problems and not as people. I have thought about that for a long time, because you can go back in our history, and generally when we have looked at people as problems and not people, that is when we have gotten into trouble. When you look at various situations we have had, and even the immigration debate would be one: Well, this is a problem. No, this is a person. Or you can look at our debate on abortion in this country and say: Well, we have got a problem here. No, we have a person here.

The consistency of what I have seen in MEL's policy position has been very much, no, this is a person. It is not just a person, this is a great person, and not just a great person, this is an unusual individual. He celebrates that with everyone. That is a beautiful thing to do and it is a beautiful thing to have, and it is a beautiful thing to see, because then that carries over into his friendships, so whenever he is talking with someone else, it may be a colleague or another individual, normally you are sitting there and you are going: Okay, I need to get something done through

this person. But I do not usually find that in a conversation with MEL. Normally what I find is: Well, yes, I need to get something done, but what I am interested in is you and what you are thinking and who you are. And this is not an opportunity for me to get something, this is an opportunity for me to celebrate another beautiful soul who is standing right there and staring at me and talking to me, and I have this unique opportunity to engage them.

How much better we all are when we look at people as people and not as problems or as opportunities or as obstacles to get through. That is where I find what he embodies does in this way he works. I am going to miss you, MEL. We are going to miss you an awful lot. We appreciate you. I appreciate the lessons you have taught me by the way you live and by the way you serve. God bless you.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida.

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I speak with a good degree of regret, because he knows the heartfelt sentiments I am going to express, because I have tried for now the better part of 3 months to talk him out of this particular day. I did not want him to resign.

It has been good for Florida the way the two of us have worked together professionally, because it is built on a personal friendship that goes back over 30 years. There was not a day we were in session here that MEL and I did not talk.

Of course, this floor of the Senate is the place that you can get away from the other distractions, and, in fact, can come together and have those conversations you want. And that was so important in us looking out for the interests of Florida.

So it is with a great deal of regret that this day has come. I think it is important that the two Senators from a State get along, and that is particularly true of two Senators who happen to be from different parties.

It is my hope that the kind of relationship that we had both privately and publicly as the two Senators from Florida sends a message to our people that you can transcend partisan differences in order to get things done. I believe that is the relationship we have had now going on in the Senate for a little over 4½ years. I only wish that relationship were going to continue for another year and a half, to the remainder of Senator MARTINEZ's term. But for personal reasons he has made this decision.

It is incumbent upon me as the senior Senator of Florida and the newly appointed Senator to have the same kind of relationship for the good of our country, for the good of our State, to transcend political differences, to have a good personal relationship so we can get work done in a bipartisan way. I intend to do that. I assume that the new Senator will do likewise. Let me say that a lot of you do not know, with regard to Senator MARTINEZ, that 30—

now going on 31, 32 years ago when we were a lot younger, he was already back then a very prominent trial lawyer. I was a pup State legislator trying to run in a congressional district that included the east coast of Florida and the interior, including Orlando. MEL was one of those high profile, very respected attorneys in Central Florida. And lo and behold, MEL and his wife Kitty, as I campaigned for that congressional seat in 1978, went out and went door to door for me. We have kept up that relationship over the years.

So it has been my privilege to have had that personal relationship turn into the professional relationship as colleagues in the Senate.

I say to MEL MARTINEZ and to Kitty, God speed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. President, this is one of those times that none of us in the Senate looks particularly forward to—when we have to come and speak about a dear friend who is leaving the Senate. But I am excited for MEL and Kitty in a number of ways and very appreciative of the great relationship, No. 1, that we have made from a personal and collegial standpoint.

I am very appreciative of the great work MEL MARTINEZ has provided to our country over the last several years. Our friend LAMAR ALEXANDER, who spoke a little bit earlier, often talks and has got me talking back home, particularly to young people, about what it means to be an American.

MEL MARTINEZ has a greater appreciation about what it means to be an American than anyone in this body because of the fact that he is the only immigrant who is a Member of the Senate. I know how hard he worked to become a citizen, and that he has a great appreciation for what it means to be an American.

What a great story it is, MEL, of you dodging bullets in Cuba, escaping communism and ultimately coming to the United States, being separated from your parents, being somewhat lost in a strange land you knew something about but did not know any people.

As a 16-year-old young man, thrust into that situation, most of us would panic to some extent. MEL never did. And through the raising in orphanages and foster homes, and ultimately being reunited with his parents after his brother Ralph came over here, and being reunited with him before he was reunited with his parents, it is such a great personal story, and such a touching story, No. 1.

But all of that served to develop a foundation in MEL MARTINEZ that America has been the beneficiary of, and certainly those of us in this body who have come to know MEL and Kitty are the beneficiaries of. I guess the ironic thing is when you read MEL's book, "A Sense of Belonging"—which I would commend to everybody who is listening out there today; what a great book; it is a short read, but you will

have a lot of fun reading it and it will be of great interest to you—what you realize is when MEL got here, there were several things that allowed him to transition into American society.

First of all, he was a bright young man. He did not know the English language when he came here, but he committed to learn it, and he did learn it. Secondly, he was a very affable person back then, just as he is now. He made friends very easily, and that helped him make that transition. Thirdly, he was a good athlete, maybe even a great athlete. In fact, if he could have hit the curve ball he might be representing the Florida Marlins today instead of the State of Florida. But it is a great way to look at the history of America when we look at the history of MEL MARTINEZ and his transition all the way from rural Cuba to the Senate.

But I guess the most important thing I could say about him is what has already been alluded to by the assistant majority leader; that is, MEL came to the Senate for all the right reasons. He came into public service for all the right reasons. He is leaving for all the right reasons. I know because of the many conversations he and I have had about our families what a dedicated husband he is, what a dedicated father he is. He has seen his two older children, Lauren and Jack, come up and become very successful in their own right. Now he has Andrew. Andrew is a 15-year-old young man who is growing up in Orlando and is doing the things all young men do. Unfortunately, his dad is gone during the week and is home during the weekends, and that is the time when young men like to be with their friends. MEL is missing a lot of that. That is the reason he is going back home, and that is the reason all of us can stand here and say: Wow, I wish I had the courage to do that.

I had a very similar experience during my days in the House. When I ran for the House in 1994, my son was a senior in high school. He played football on what ultimately became the State championship football team. There was no question from my campaign staff as to where I was going to be on Friday night. I was there to see my son. MEL is missing the experience of seeing Andrew play on Thursday nights because he is here doing what he was elected to do; that is, serve the people of Florida. He is going to now have the opportunity to experience with Andrew the same sorts of things he did with Lauren and Jack. For that, we can say great things about his service to our country, his service as mayor of Orlando or as Secretary of HUD, or his service in the Senate. But his service to his family is ultimately what is important, and, wow, what a public servant he is to his family.

So to him and his wife Kitty we say we thank you for the great service you have provided. We thank you for the great friendships you have provided to all of us as Members of this body. Whatever road you ultimately travel

down in the days ahead, we know you are going to continue to be a success. We know you are going to continue to serve our country in your own special way. But, most importantly, you are going to serve our God and you are going to serve your family.

So, MEL, thanks for everything you have done. Thanks for your friendship. God be with you and Godspeed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Tennessee.

Mr. CORKER. Mr. President, I think you know I spend very little time talking on the Senate floor, and I plan to keep it that way. But I do want to spend a moment paying tribute to my great friend, MEL MARTINEZ. I have had the privilege of sitting beside him on the Banking Committee. We commiserate about many things that happen in this body.

I love working with MEL MARTINEZ, and I am going to miss him. I consider MEL to be the epitome of decency in this body. I think he is a person who truly wants to do what is best for this country. I have seen him many times tormented over decisions we all make, which are very difficult to decide from time to time: What is best for our country over the long term? I value that in him so much.

I think this body will be diminished with him leaving. Having people like MEL, who, again, have such a sense of decency—which is, as Senator CHAMBLISS mentioned, one of the reasons he will be departing soon—will be a loss for this body.

I have not met anybody here who I think is a finer individual, nor anybody who I will miss more than Senator MEL MARTINEZ. So I am happy for Kitty. I am happy for his family. I am sorry for us. But I am glad I have served in the Senate with somebody I consider to be such an outstanding person as MEL.

So, MEL, thank you. Thank you for the many confidential conversations we have had through the years, the frankness with which we have been able to talk about so many things.

Each of us brings something to this body that is unique. I think that is why it functions the way it does. I think your insights into our relationships with the countries of Latin America, to many of the things that were happening there from the inside because of so many of the relationships you have helped all of us make decisions that are more sound.

So that peace will go with you as you leave. Surely somebody else over time will help fill in that vacuum, but I value the many things you have shared with me that have helped me to think in a more thoughtful manner, and I look forward to talking to you in the years ahead about what is happening in your life. I thank you for what you have done in mine.

I thank the Chair.

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I rise today to give tribute to my colleague and friend, Senator MEL MARTINEZ. During his time in the Senate, MEL has

served the State of Florida and our country well.

Overcoming great odds, MEL and his life's journey is an inspiration to all. At age 15, he fled his native Cuba as part of a Catholic humanitarian effort. Alone, and speaking virtually no English, MEL was placed in temporary youth facilities. Later, he lived with two foster families, for whom he has great appreciation and affection. In 1966, he was happily reunited with his own family members in Florida.

These experiences strengthened MEL and shaped his views. He went on to earn graduate and law degrees from Florida State University and practice law for 25 years before serving as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development and then joining us here in the United States Senate.

During his tenure, I appreciated MEL's leadership, particularly working on the U.S. Senate Republican Conference Task Force on Hispanic Affairs—a task force I formed in 1987. I have long felt that we should not try to put this vital and growing segment of our population in a box because they care about the same things we all do—having a safe nation, strong families, a good education for all our children, and good jobs that provide well. At the same time, I recognized that Hispanics and Latinos bring unique and important perspectives to the issues we face in Congress.

MEL worked to advance the mission of the task force to promote greater participation in the democratic process, to create more job opportunities, ensure better access to health care, and educate our children.

While there is much talk on both sides of the aisle of strategy and outreach to try to “woo” Hispanics and Latinos, we should actively listen to their concerns and encourage their participation. That is true of all segments of our population. That is what I have tried to do and that is what MEL has done, too. I understand we have MEL's firm commitment to continue this important work.

Our colleague from Florida has taken strong positions on a number of issues that have come before this body. MEL has supported prodemocracy movements in Cuba while urging that its dictatorship of abuse and misery is not legitimized by our government.

As a member of the Armed Services Committee, MEL has been a strong supporter of our war on terror, especially as our brave troops combat terrorism overseas for the safety of our Nation.

MEL has supported a reasonable and rational approach to ensuring our Nation's energy security. He has helped to highlight our Nation's lack of action to increase our production of nuclear energy—our Nation's largest sources of green, clean electricity. He recognizes that our domestic electricity supply must be based upon a major source of green baseload power, and that nuclear power holds the most potential to ensure that the American economy is

fueled by an abundant, cheap, and clean source of energy.

MEL has worked with us on health care reform. This is not a Republican or Democrat issue—it is an American issue which needs to be addressed in a bipartisan and fiscally responsible manner.

Our colleague has worked to defeat card check because it reduces employees' right to a free and private election to choose if they want to unionize.

MEL has sought workable reforms to our system of immigration. He spoke out against the negative rhetoric that divided and polarized. He will be missed in this body as the immigration debate moves forward.

I know my friend is looking forward to writing the new chapter in the book of his life. I thank him for his service to our country and wish him well.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, we have had a chance today to recognize our colleague, Senator MEL MARTINEZ, who, sadly for most of us, is leaving the Senate. Today will be his last day. He had an opportunity to address the Senate this morning and give some final thoughts. I would like to take a few moments to give my final thoughts about Senator MARTINEZ. I expect to see him many times in the future as a private citizen, but my thoughts about him and his contribution here and his life story.

Obviously, all of us have a story to tell, the story of a journey to this place. But in the case of Senator MARTINEZ, the journey certainly has more twists and turns than most.

MEL MARTINEZ first came to this country when he was 15. A political exile, he spoke no English, and did not know when—or if—he would ever see his family again. His journey from that point to now is proof of the boundless promise that exists in America.

More than 50 years ago in a small town in Cuba, an 11-year-old MEL MARTINEZ comforted his little brother as they lay on the bedroom floor while gunfire erupted in the streets. It was Fidel Castro's takeover, and life changed very quickly for the Martinez family and every Cuban.

When MEL's parents overheard Cuban militiamen threatening to kill their son for wearing a religious symbol, they had had enough. Through a humanitarian effort sponsored by the Catholic Church, MEL was sent to America to find a better life.

Eagerly embracing his adopted hometown of Orlando, Florida, soon MEL came to feel part of America. He mastered English and earned both his bachelor's and law degrees from Florida State University.

And four long years after leaving Cuba, he was reunited with his parents in Florida after they too escaped Castro's regime—and they were so proud to see the brave young man their boy had become.

Because of this long separation from his parents, I can understand now when MEL says it is the tug of family ties

that calls him back home to Florida. But those of us who had the pleasure of working with him in Washington are sorry to see him go.

In the Senate, MEL made his mark as a leading voice for greater democratic freedoms in Cuba. He has fought to strengthen Social Security and to eliminate fraud in Medicare and Medicaid.

He has given hope to millions of families by working to increase funding for research to cure Alzheimer's. And he has stood for America's defense in a dangerous world, and for the troops that so bravely take up the fight to defend us.

For 3 years as the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Senator MARTINEZ worked to increase home ownership. After the terrorist attacks of 9/11, his agency was charged with directing funds to rebuild lower Manhattan. He fulfilled his duties even as he, along with all of us, reeled at the senseless deaths of 3,000 innocents.

And as the cochair of the President's Commission for the Assistance to a Free Cuba, he played a leading role in the administration's efforts to bring freedom to the land of his birth.

While in Washington, MEL forged many friendships as well. I first got to know MEL during his days as a Cabinet secretary. Elaine and I certainly enjoyed the company of MEL and Kitty.

My wife Elaine and MEL had one thing in common. I used to pose the following quiz to people: Who were the only Cabinet Secretaries who never missed a State of the Union? As everyone knows, it is typically somebody in the line of succession who misses the Cabinet meeting because the entire government is up here on one night. MEL and Elaine never missed a Cabinet meeting because they were the only two members of the Cabinet who were not born in the United States and therefore were not eligible to assume the Presidency if an emergency required that.

We came to understand MEL's connection to his adopted hometown of Orlando, where for 25 years he worked as a successful lawyer. We learned how his election as chairman of Orange County—a job analogous to a mayor, and in one of Florida's largest counties—started a second career in public service to the country that had given him so much.

Now MEL will return to Florida, and I don't know what his future may hold. But I do know that he'll accomplish anything he sets his mind to. The incredible journey he has taken, ever since he flew on a DC-6 from Havana to Miami, is proof of that. MEL's life shows us that in America, any dream is possible.

MEL, it has been an honor serving with you, and it has been a pleasure for Elaine and I to get to know you and Kitty through the years. Whenever you may return to Washington next, please remember you will always have plenty of friends in the U.S. Senate.

Ms. COLLINS. Mr. President, I rise today to bid farewell and to express my gratitude to Senator MEL MARTINEZ as he retires from service in the U.S. Senate. During his time here, he established an admirable reputation for hard work, dedication to his State and our Nation, and a commitment to principles.

I have had the privilege of working with Senator MARTINEZ as a member of the Armed Services Committee and its Seapower Subcommittee. In addition, we worked together on the Special Committee on Aging, where he has served as ranking member.

Working with Senator MARTINEZ has always been rewarding. This has been especially true on the Armed Services Committee, where he brings to bear on defense issues both detailed knowledge and long-range vision. On the Seapower Subcommittee, he has been a strong ally in keeping our Navy pre-eminent and has been a highly effective advocate for continuing the DDG-1000 program, the next generation of destroyers.

Senator MARTINEZ's work on the Special Committee on Aging continued his long record of shaping policies important to seniors in Florida and throughout America. From local government to his service as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development and in the Senate, he has been a strong voice for ensuring that all Americans live longer, healthier, and more productive lives.

But the greatest legacy MEL MARTINEZ leaves the Senate is his inspiring life story. Born in Cuba, he arrived in America at age 15. He earned his undergraduate and law degrees from Florida State University, and went on to practice law for 25 years. He demonstrates the highest qualities of our nation of immigrants, of the opportunities America provides, and of the character and determination of those who come to our shores. His desire to continue to work for expanded freedoms to the people of Cuba exemplifies his character and principles. I join my colleagues in wishing him and his family well, and in looking forward to many more contributions to the public good from this man of many gifts and accomplishments.

Mr. McCAIN. Mr. President, today I rise to recognize and thank my colleague and friend from Florida, MEL MARTINEZ, for his service to this country and to wish him luck in the years to come. I am proud and humbled to have had the chance to work with MEL over the last few years on some of the most difficult and trying issues of our time and I will miss his honesty, heart and dedication when he leaves the Senate this week.

While many of my Senate colleagues are familiar with MEL's inspiring personal story I feel that it is important for the American people to know that MEL MARTINEZ's life has personified the American dream and teaches us what we can all accomplish through

hard work, a love of God and country and true dedication to a higher cause. MEL came to the U.S. in the 1960s as a young Cuban immigrant and became the first Cuban-American to serve in a Presidential Cabinet, as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, and then the first Cuban-American U.S. Senator.

As a freshman Senator, MEL didn't shy away from the tough issues—he did not sit back and let others tackle the tough, controversial tasks—he dove in head first. Personally, the most memorable example of MEL's courageous work is his support of comprehensive immigration reform.

The 2006 and 2007 immigration debates were difficult times in the U.S. Senate. We had both political parties and an American public divided on an issue that I still believe will define the future of our country for generations to come. For many, it would have been tempting to sit on the sidelines, take the safe votes, keep your head down and just wait for this one to pass, but not MEL MARTINEZ. He took his strong personal convictions and put them in to action. We spent many hours together, working in a bipartisan fashion to try to reach an agreement that could be acceptable to both sides of the aisle and ensure the security of our Nation. Every day, MEL MARTINEZ was in the trenches, on the floor, working to improve the bill, working to reach a bipartisan compromise and working for a better future for our country and our children.

I also had the pleasure of traveling with MEL to the Republic of Georgia where he met with Georgian leaders and spoke openly about the importance of United States support for freedom in all countries, both those distant and close to our shores. MEL spoke with conviction due to his early childhood spent in a country controlled by a repressive dictator.

Many in this Chamber will fondly recall MEL's leadership in the Senate and his work for the State of Florida. I will remember my friend, his courageous leadership on the tough issues and his willingness to put the future of our Nation before his own self interest.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

TRAVEL PROMOTION ACT OF 2009

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 1023, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1023) to establish a nonprofit corporation to communicate United States entry policies and otherwise promote leisure, business, and scholarly travel to the United States.

Pending:

Reid (for Dorgan/Rockefeller) amendment No. 1347, of a perfecting nature.

Reid amendment No. 1348 (to amendment No. 1347), to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 1349 (to the language proposed to be stricken by amendment No. 1347), to change the enactment date.

Reid amendment No. 1350 (to amendment No. 1349), of a perfecting nature.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CASEY). The Senator from North Dakota.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, this legislation is now in the 30 hours postcloture period. We had a cloture vote late yesterday afternoon, and I believe the 30 hours postcloture will expire sometime later this afternoon, at 4 o'clock or 4:30 or so.

Let me again explain what we are trying to do in this legislation. This is reasonably simple. In all of the partisan dust that is created in this country, I think this is one of the few pieces of legislation that has broad bipartisan support. We have, I believe, 53 cosponsors for this bill—Republicans and Democrats—and the proposition is very simple.

First of all, we have lost a lot of jobs in this country. We are in the deepest recession since the Great Depression, and a whole lot of folks have lost their jobs. This is a bill to try to create more jobs. But it is a bill that especially addresses a problem that has been created in the last 8 or 9 years.

Since the year 2000, here are a couple numbers. Since the year 2000, there are 56 million more people living on this planet who are taking international trips. Let me say that again. This is a big planet with billions of people living on it. By the way, half of them have never made a phone call. Half live on less than \$2 a day. But on this big planet there are people who travel internationally, and there are 56 million more international travelers right now than there were 9 years ago. But there are 633,000 fewer international travelers visiting the United States than visited our country 9 years ago.

Why is that the case? And why is it important? Well, it is important for a number of reasons. It is important because international travelers—I am talking about overseas travelers—on average spend about \$4,500 per person per trip. Their travel supports a lot of jobs in the tourism industry. It supports jobs in every State in our country. So it is important for that reason—it creates jobs.

But it is important for another reason as well. When people come here from other parts of the world and see America and experience the culture and the character of our country, they leave, almost inevitably, with a very positive impression of this country of ours.

So for two reasons this is important. We have fewer international visitors—633,000 fewer—per year than we had 9 years ago, even at a time when 56 million more people are traveling around the globe for overseas visits.

I described yesterday what other countries are doing. Other countries